

Brookline Preservation Commission

Demolition Application Report

Address: 178 Mason Terrace

Applicant: RDC Mason 178, LLC

Building Type: Childcare Building

National Register Listing (if Applicable): N/A



Historical/Architectural Significance:

178 Mason Terrace was constructed in 1928 as the Frances Stern Nursery School. The building's original use as a nursery and kindergarten was retained for roughly 92 years. The building permit to construct the building lists the original owner as the Frances Stern Nursery School and A.M. Sonnabend, a well-known hotelier and the founder of the Sonesta International Hotel Corporation. The nursery was named after Frances Stern, a graduate of the Garland Kindergarten Training School; Ms. Stern had a lifelong interest in teaching nutrition, including to children and in 1918 established the Boston Dispensary Food Clinic, one of the first of its kind, and which has since evolved into the Frances Stern Nutrition Center at Tufts Medical Center.

178 Mason Terrace was designed by the architectural firm Schein and Levine, who also designed Sonnabend's house the same year at 252 Kent Street in Brookline. Sumner Schein and Philip Levine practiced together from 1925-1929 before Levine left to join the Akron Rubber Company. Schein went on to design many of the First National Stores, a grocery store chain, in the 1930s, and designed mostly larger commercial buildings. Sonnabend, Stern, and Schein were all active in the local Jewish community, and presumably might have known one another, hence a possible connection to 178 Mason Terrace. It is unclear if Frances Stern herself ever had any ties, aside from the name, to the building.

The nursery must have encountered early success, as a large rear addition was constructed in 1929; the year after the building was erected. Schein and Levine are once again listed as the architects. A 1931 newspaper article states that "the school functions in an especially planned and equipped building...the child is placed in an environment planned especially for its needs physically, socially and economically." Mothers of enrolled children were expected to participate one afternoon every two weeks to observe what they considered to be approved methods of managing young children and their behavior. The nursery and kindergarten kept a record of the child's behavior, development, and routine patterns. The

school was also involved with national programs. Between 1933-1945 the WPA had a nursery school program, and put out bulletins, at least one of which included a submittal by the Frances Stern Nursery and Kindergarten of how they kept records of observations of the children enrolled. The Frances Stern Nursery School continued until it was sold in 1946; however the use was retained and was most recently known as Les Petits Nursery School.

The one story, wood frame structure at 178 Mason Terrace rises from a concrete foundation and is situated atop a hill overlooking Mason Terrace. The 1928 portion of the building retains its large wood shingle siding, multi light windows, including a large industrial multi pane window on the right side, and an asphalt side gable roof. As previously noted, in 1929 a large one story rear addition was constructed with a flat tar and gravel roof. The 1929 permit lists that the existing structure has both a pitched and flat roof, which might insinuate that the addition to the left side had been added during or shortly after initial construction. The additions were intended to match the original structure, with wood shingle siding and similar large industrial windows. While no permit exists, it is clear that at some point after 1978, the siding was changed and the windows and doors were replaced on the left side and rear portions. The building's center entry projects forward with a gable roof. While the use of the building has consistently been solely for childcare since its construction, the building itself maintains a residential feel from the street, which ties it into its surrounding residential neighborhood.

The building at 178 Mason Terrace meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

- c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the Town or Commonwealth;
- d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The building at 178 Mason Terrace retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, and workmanship.



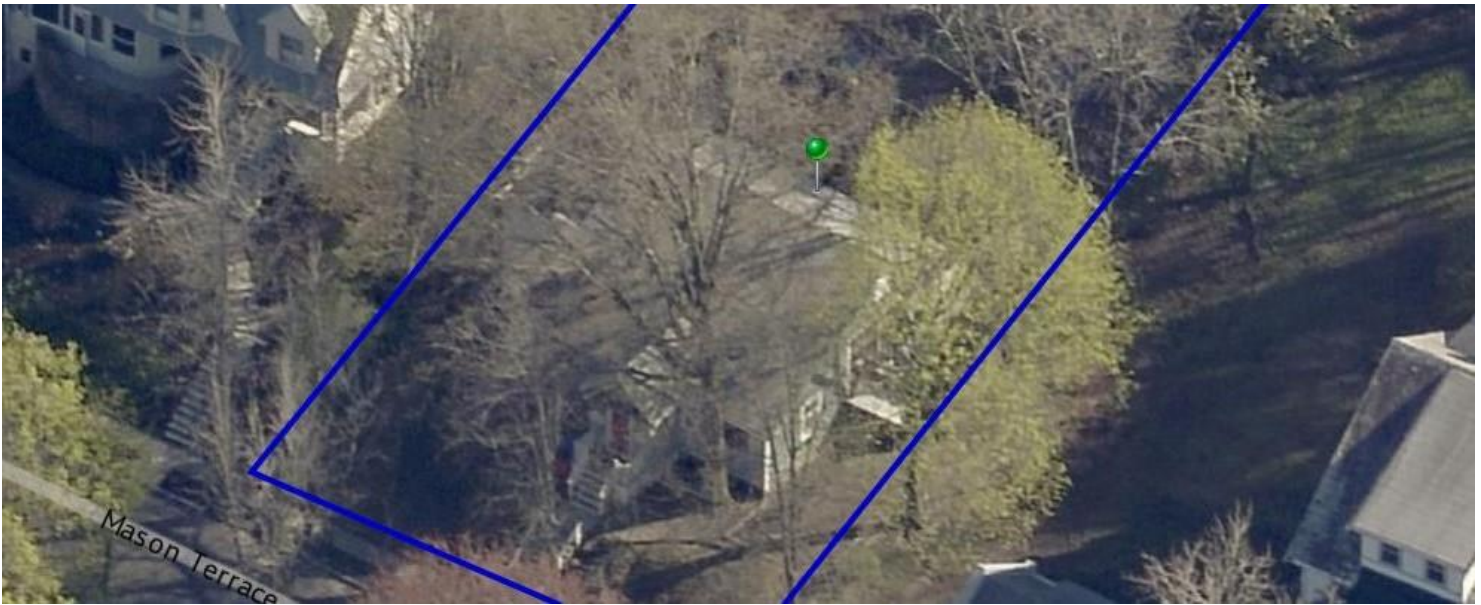
Aerial view of 178 Mason Terrace, looking east.



Aerial view of 178 Mason Terrace, looking north.



Aerial view of 178 Mason Terrace, looking west.



Aerial view of 178 Mason Terrace, looking south.



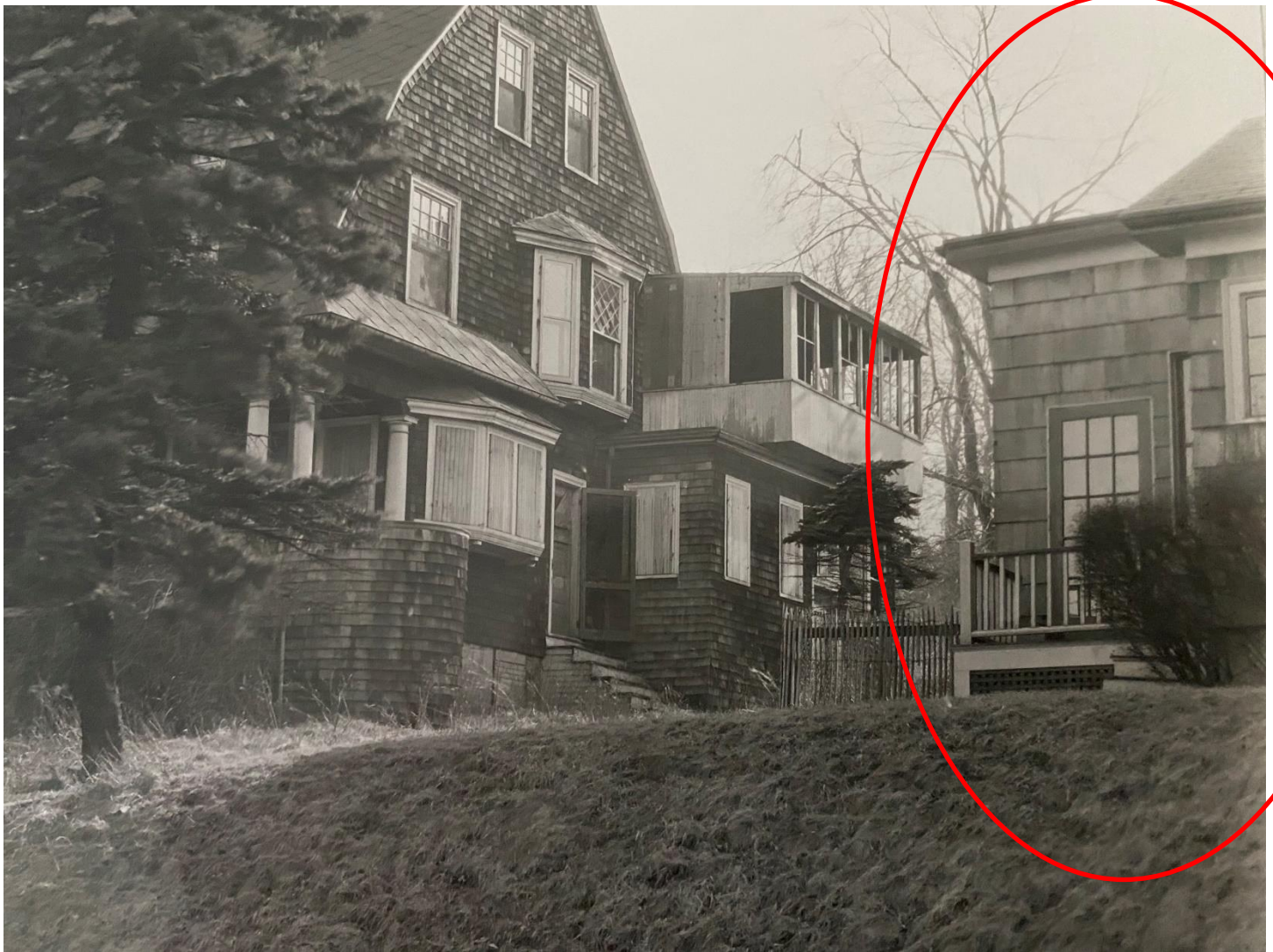
Photograph of the front of 178 Mason Terrace



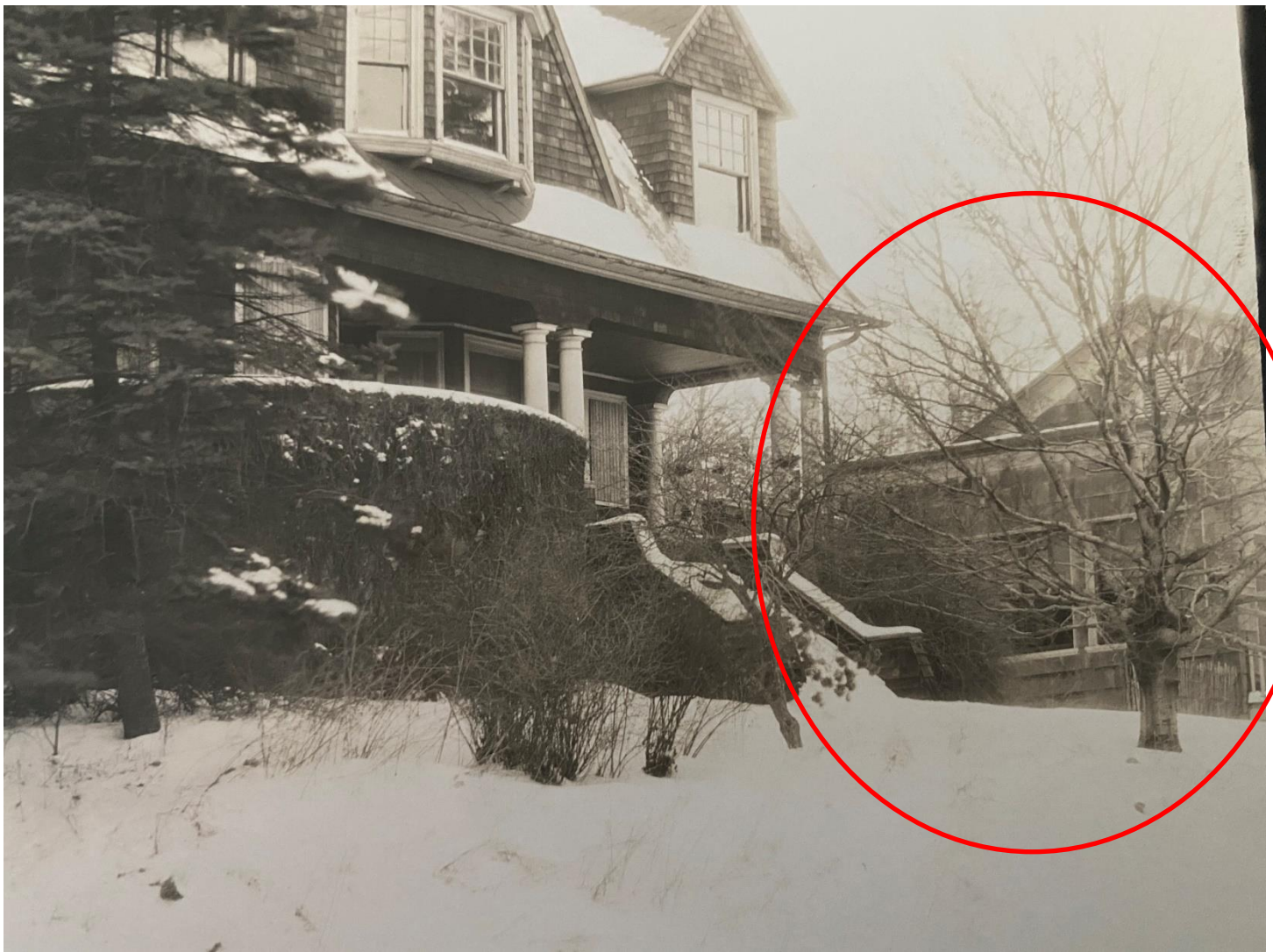
Photographs of the right side and rear elevations of 178 Mason Terrace



Photograph of the left side elevation of 178 Mason Terrace



1939 Photograph of a small portion of the left side of 178 Mason Terrace



1939 Photograph of a small portion of the left side of 178 Mason Terrace



1939 photograph of a portion of the rear of 178 Mason Terrace showing the construction of the side and rear additions



1978 Photographs of 178 Mason Terrace

